

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

JAMES C. GREENWOOD
8TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
AND THE ENVIRONMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND COMPETITIVENESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3808

July 19, 1993

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The Honorable James H. Quello
Interim Chairman
FCC
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

92-266

RECEIVED

AUG 20 1993

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear The Honorable Quello:

Enclosed is a copy of the letter which I received from Ms. Cynthia Jones of Ivyland, Pennsylvania.

I would appreciate any advice or assistance which you can provide in response to the concerns raised by Ms. Jones.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

im
James C. Greenwood

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JCG:sc
Enclosure

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AUG 20 1993

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
JUL 12 1993

July 8, 1993

JUL 16 1993

The Honorable James Greenwood
69 E. Oakland Avenue
Doylestown, PA 18901

Dear Congressman Greenwood:

As you can see from the enclosed letter I am upset with the service provided by my local cable company. In addition to the problem mentioned in the letter, I am also annoyed that the pricing options offered by Suburban Cable are confusing and still too high and they keep changing the location of the channels without explanation. Just when I think I know what number equals the channel I want to watch or tape, it changes again.

I know a bill will soon go into effect that regulates cable service and will supposedly result in lower monthly charges but I wonder if it will be helpful to me and the other customers of Suburban Cable.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Jones

Cynthia Jones
20 Ivy Meadows
Ivyland, PA 18974

enclosure

July 7, 1993

Mr. Dave Mohn, General Manager
Suburban Cable TV
2319 York Road
Jamison, PA 18929

Dear Mr. Mohn:

I recently experienced a problem with my cable service which is provided by Suburban Cable at a cost of \$44.82 a month. We have one premium channel, HBO, because my husband likes to watch sports such as tennis and boxing that are presented only on HBO. I think we already pay too much for HBO but I cannot convince him to drop it even though the number of boxing matches on HBO decreases every year and the number on pay per view increases.

My problem began when I wanted to use the timer on our VCR to tape some of the Wimbledon Tennis Tournament that was being broadcast on HBO last week. When I turned on the TV in the morning before going to work I discovered that when I used my A-B switch the cable box hooked up to the VCR and accessed by the B switch did not work. If I switched to A, I could get every cable channel but on B, I got nothing. So I ran downstairs where we have a second cable hookup and a second VCR but no A-B switch and discovered that I could not get HBO (channel 13) but I could get all the other cable channels. I think that the reason we got the A-B switch option on one of our TV/VCRs was because it is not possible to tape anything on HBO without this set up. However, at this moment I realized that although we were supposed to get HBO in both places we got it in neither. After running up and down the stairs several times to make sure that I still could not get HBO, and then trying to recycle the cable box that didn't work, I called Suburban Cable for service. I spent 5 minutes listening to the various voice mail choices before I discovered that no one was there until 9 A.M. and all I could do was leave a message and go to work without being able to set the timer to tape the tennis matches.

When I got to work, I called again after 9 A.M. and again listened to 5 minutes of voice mail choices and then waited until I got a real person. When I explained my problem she said that HBO worked just fine there and there must be something wrong at my house. (I already knew that.) She said that there might be something wrong with the cable box and that if it was an older box it could be exchanged for a newer box with an onscreen display for an additional \$3.95 a month. I asked her if this would eliminate this kind of problem and she said no--of course not--disruptions in service from time to time cannot be avoided. She then said that she would send a signal to all my cable boxes to try and correct the problem. However, since I was not

at home and would not be at home until 6 p.m., I had no way of knowing whether or not this would help. And even if it did, I would be unable to tape and watch the tennis matches because they would be all over by the time my husband and I got home from work.

I have a few suggestions for your service department:

1. Since the majority of people work during the day, your office hours should start before 9 A.M. so that people could contact you with problems before they went to work. If I had been able to reach someone at 8:30 AM, I would have been home when someone sent a signal to the cable box to see if that would solve my problem. (It did, as I found out that evening.) I don't think 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. are unreasonable hours for a service monopoly. Other service companies that I use can be contacted at 8 A.M. and will even send a serviceman to the house at that time if necessary.
2. I know that the use of voice mail is cost effective and widely utilized by all businesses even though many people dislike it. However, when I have a problem that requires speaking to a real person I am annoyed by all the time I have to spend listening to choices that don't apply to my problem. There must be a way to get to a person more quickly since a machine cannot correct any service problems. Again, as a service monopoly you should have some consideration for your customers' convenience and satisfaction.
3. If the cable boxes that I am currently using are now outdated, you should replace them at no additional charge. As I mentioned above I already pay \$44.82 each month (\$538 a year) for cable service which can be disrupted at any time for no apparent reason. If your equipment is not working correctly you should replace it or repair it before asking me to pay more.

I know this letter is long but I feel strongly about the high cost and inconvenience of the service provided by Suburban Cable. I am sending a copy of this letter to my Congressman because I want him to know that the recent cable regulation bill has not had any positive effect on my costs that I can see and more legislation is needed to ensure that people get what they are paying so much for.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Jones

Cynthia Jones
20 Ivy Meadows
Ivyland, PA 18974

cc: Congressman James Greenwood